

# Rare Animals of Louisiana



## Louisiana Pine Snake

### *Pituophis ruthveni*

Federal Status: Candidate

**Rarity Rank:** S2S3/G3Q

#### **Identification:**

- 25 to 56 inches long
- Pale tan with a row of large black or brown blotches down the back and a smaller series on each side
- Underside whitish with obscure brown spotting
- Tip of snout pointed
- Scales keeled and in 27 to 33 rows
- Most active in March through May and in the Fall (especially November)
- Spend majority of time underground in burrows made by pocket gophers



#### **Habitat:**

- Sandy, well drained soils
- Open pine forests, xeric sandhill woodlands, especially longleaf pine savannahs and with well developed herbaceous understory dominated by grasses

**Food Habits:** Primarily pocket gophers

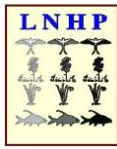
**Reproduction:** Largest eggs and hatchlings of any snakes in the United States, with an average clutch size of 4

#### **Threats:**

- Habitat destruction through urban development and conversion to other incompatible uses.
- Alteration of fire regime which can restrict the pine snake to only portions of the previous range
- Vehicle mortality

#### **Beneficial Management Practices:**

- Prescribed burning, thinning, and longleaf pine restoration to maintain or establish open, herbaceous-dominated vegetative understory conditions on appropriate sites
- Continue research in order to gain more information on population numbers, range, habitat, behavior and management requirements



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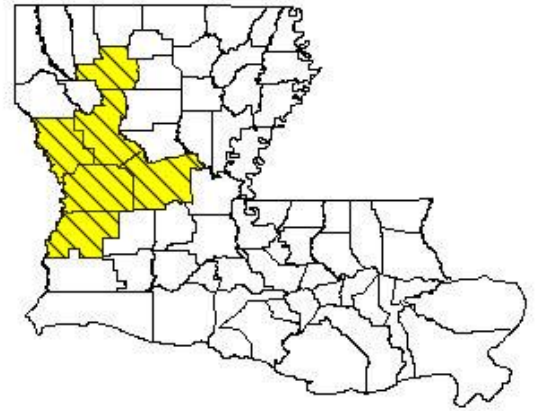
## ***Population Monitoring:***

- Population monitoring is difficult due to the pine snakes use of underground pocket gopher burrows
- The typical monitoring method is trapping, but it is expensive, time consuming and trapping success is very low
- A new method of monitoring the population using dogs is being developed for the Louisiana Pine Snake
- The dog is trained to locate the snakes based on their scent
- The dog's use of scent to locate the snake may make it easier to find pine snakes in the future and result in a more accurate estimation of population size.



## ***U. S. Range:***

- LA, TX
- Upland areas of central Louisiana including Beauregard, Bienville, Natchitoches, Rapides, Sabine and Vernon Parishes
- LA pine snakes only live in areas where pocket gophers are present



## ***References:***

NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. 2006. Version 6.1 . Arlington, Virginia,

USA: NatureServe. Available: <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: Oct. 30, 2007).